

NEW GOLF RULES FROM JANUARY 1, 2019

BALL MOVING ON THE PUTTING GREEN

Under Rule 13.1d, there will **no longer be a penalty** if a player (or opponent) **accidentally** causes the player's ball to move on the putting green.

The substance of this Rule change has already been implemented as of 1 January 2017 by authorizing Committees to adopt a Local Rule that eliminates the penalty for accidentally moving a ball on the putting green.

Also under Rule 13.1d, the procedure for when a ball on the putting green is moved by wind, water or other natural forces is revised, so that it must sometimes be replaced and sometimes be played from its new spot:

- **If the ball had been lifted and replaced on its original spot** before it moved, the ball must always be **replaced on its original spot**, regardless of what caused it to move.
- The ball must be played **from its new spot** only if the ball had **not been lifted and replaced** before it moved.

Reasons for change

There are a number of reasons why a ball at rest on the putting green might move, and it can be difficult to determine whether a player caused the ball to move or whether the ball was moved by wind or other natural causes. When a ball moves while the player is doing nothing more than taking normal actions to prepare for a stroke, it can seem unfair for the player to be penalised. Most "ball moved" situations occur on the putting green, involve minimal movement of the ball, frequently occur when the player is taking reasonable actions to prepare for a stroke and the ball can be easily replaced.

These considerations are not the same when the ball lies off the putting green, and so the penalty will continue to apply (with exceptions, such as accidentally moving a ball during search) to a player or opponent to reinforce the principle that the ball should be played as it lies and that players should continue to exercise care when near to a ball in play.

When a ball at rest is moved by natural forces such as the wind, it is normally played as it lies because its movement is considered a continuation of the previous stroke, as no person or object has affected where the ball lies. But when the moved ball had already been lifted and replaced, the connection to the previous stroke is no longer obvious.

This is especially true on the putting green, where a player is allowed to mark, lift and replace a ball for any reason and many players do so as a matter of course:

- It can be difficult to determine whether a person or object caused the ball to move or whether it was moved by wind or other natural causes.
- It will simplify the Rules to provide that a ball always must be replaced if it moves from a spot where it had already been lifted and replaced.

When a ball on the green moves after having come to rest:

- It can result in outcomes that seem unfair, such as when the ball rolls off the green (sometimes ending up in a bunker or in water) or rolls close to or into the hole.
- Requiring the ball to be replaced if it had already been lifted and replaced will eliminate such outcomes in those situations.

This Rule change may also be helpful in conditions of very high wind on the course, as it may allow play to continue in conditions where it might otherwise not be possible or fair because too many balls are being blown from their spot on the green